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# The Carved Decoration of Middle and Late Byzantine Templa*

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## Introduction

The growing richness and progressive spread of the carved decoration of architectural elements of middle and late Byzantine churches mark a clear difference from the practice in Early Byzantine churches. Although the origin of the phenomenon is difficult to pinpoint, this development should be linked to the evolution of the liturgical planning of the sanctuaries, and by consequence to that of the liturgy itself. From the Early Byzantine period, the mystical aspect of the cult celebration was enhanced in some churches by a high chancel barrier. In various provinces, archaeological evidence bears witness to the transformation of low screens into high screens during the beginning of the sixth century,[1] whereas in Constantinople, from the fifth century on, we have high screens with columns or post-colonnettes supporting an epistyle. Archaeological and literary evidence bears witness to the existence of this type of templon in the church of the monastery of St. John of Studios,[2] in St. Polyeuktos[3] and in St. Sophia.[4] More recently, Urs Peschlow identified in the Topkapi Saray eight post-colonnettes belonging to a similar templon.[5] Nonetheless, compared to the templa of the sanctuaries of Early Christian churches, the breadth of those of the Middle Byzantine period has changed: little by little they become true screens between the naos on one hand, and the areas considered sacred (i.e. the sanctuary, the prothesis and the diakonikon) on the other. The carved decoration spreads over the front and underside of the epistyle, over the capitals and the supporting colonnettes, the closure slabs and their crowning, as well as over the posts flanking the sanctuary to which were attached carved icon frames. The development of this ornamentation naturally contributes to the impression of beauty given by the coherent ordering of the entire interior decoration of the buildings.

* Natacha Massar helped me a lot to translate this study in English: I thank her very much for her great availability.

1 Let's mention two examples in two different regions of the empire: the south basilica of Aliki on the Greek island of Thasos, s. Jean-Pierre Sodini and Konstantinos Kolokostas, Aliki, II : la basilique double, in: Études thasiennes 10, Paris 1984, p. 26–51, and the chapel dedicated to the Virgin situated in the Mose's basilica on Mount Nebo in Jordania, s. Anne Michel, Les églises d'époque byzantine et ummayyade de Jordanie (Provinces d'Arabie et de Palestine) Ve–VIIIe siècle. Typologie architecturale et aménagements liturgiques (avec catalogue des monuments), in : Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité tardive 2, Turnhout 2001, p. 338–339.

2 Mathews 1971, p. 26–27.

3 Mathews 1971, p. 54, fig. 26, pl. 39.

4 Fayant and Chuvin 1997, p. 104–107; Mathews 1971, p. 98.

5 Urs Peschlow, Zum Templon in Konstantinopel, in : ᾿Αρμός, Τιμητικός Τόμος στον Κατηγητή Ν. Κ. Μουτσόπουλο, vol. 3, Thessaloniki 1991, p. 1453–1470.

The templa preserved in different regions of the Byzantine Empire, which appear at first sight to present strong decorative and technical similarities, also testify to the wide variety of carved decorations in the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. By studying some examples located in Constantinople, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia and in Greece in a chronological order, I will try to highlight the technical and stylistic evolution of the carved templa decoration, and to determine the respective influence of the capital and of regional centers on the choice of ornamental compositions.

## Shape and main carved motifs of the Middle and Late Byzantine templa

Before examining the evolution of the decor that characterizes the templa of a given region in the Byzantine Empire, I will insist on certain differences in decorative composition between Early Christian and Middle Byzantine screens. Then I shall briefly present the main motifs used for each architectural element belonging to the templa. As on early Byzantine slabs, the cross continues to occupy an important place on the chancel slabs but it takes on more varied shapes: next to Latin and Greek crosses, appear plaited crosses, Maltese crosses, and double-barred crosses often flanked by foliate or animal motifs.[6] The chrisma inscribed in a circle is still used but rather rarely.[7] The slabs are often crowned by independent architectural elements that bear a specific carved decoration[8]. The posts of the templa present a decor more widespread and more stylized than in the Early Christian period. A succession of squares or circles knotted together with interlace is very frequent. Floral motifs, such as foliated scrolls of half-palmettes, decorate many posts. Two or three-strand braids are also frequently found. Sometimes birds are represented, as on some very beautiful examples from the Archaeological Museum of Andros (Fig. 1). On the other hand, anthropomorphic figures are quite rare. Isolated examples are the two posts decorated with a saint (Hagios Stephanos and Hagios Theodoros) in a medallion found in Sebaste in Phrygia.[9] The colonnettes, which prolong the posts, can be either circular or, more frequently, octagonal and fasciculated, in which case, the eight sides are sometimes decorated with combined geometric and floral motifs. From the twelfth century on, a knot of Herakles often appears at mid-height of fasciculated colonnettes, especially in Greece and in the Balkan (Fig. 2). The ornamentation of the capitals that crown the templa colonnettes often includes crosses or a floral decor with palmettes and rosettes.[10] But some are de-

6 Grabar 1976, pl. XLII-c, LXXVIII-b, LXXXd–e.
7 The decor, very widespread during the early Byzantine period, consisting of a chrisma flanked by two crosses supported by sinuous stems ending with ivy leaf, was imitated during the Middle Byzantine period. In these new compositions, a rosace replaced the chrisma and snakes were carved instead of sinuous stems. It's difficult to know if these motifs adorned the Middle Byzantine slabs of the templa because the only preserved example is one slab from the façade of the gallery of the katholikon of the Hosios Loukas monastery in Phokis (Grabar 1976, pl. XXI-b, no. 44).
8 Some slabs preserved in Corinth, in Lycia (Myra) and in Phrygia (Sandikli/Otluk, archaeological museum of Afyon) have a crowning carved in the same piece of marble, s. Vanderheyde 2000; Sema Alpaslan, Demre Aziz Nikolaos Kilisesi'ndeki Trapez Kesitli Levhalar, Levha Üstü ve Levha Kaideleri, in: Adalya 2 (1997), p. 235–247, fig. 1–5; Buchwald 1995, fig. 3; Sodini 1995, p. 295–296, fig. 1.
9 Grabar 1976, pl. IX a–b, no. 11.
10 Let's mention some examples published by Martin Dennert (Dennert 1997): one capital from Milet



corated with birds, which occupying this place should be understood as symbols, like eagles with opened wings,[11] peacocks, either isolated[12] or flanking the fountain of life.[13] More rarely these capitals bear a pseudo-kufic ornamentation (Fig. 3).

The lack of archeological material makes it difficult to determine how the early Byzantine epistyles were decorated. Only the testimony of Paul the Silentiary offers us some information on the decor of the front of St. Sophia's epistyle. It was covered with silver leaf and was adorned with a succession of medallions with representations of the Christ surrounded by the Virgin, the prophets and the apostles.[14] Anthropomorphic figures are also to be found on Middle Byzantine epistyles, often combined with repeating floral and/or geometrical designs. A row of arches is one of the motifs most frequently associated with anthropomorphic representations.[15] Nonetheless, this type of representation is not the most widespread: in general, on the front of epistyles, one finds one of two types of compositions particularly suited to the elongated shape of this architectural element, either a row of arches framing floral elements (often palmettes) or a geometrical decor (Fig. 4).[16] This last one most often consists in a line of interlaced square or circles with rosettes and, especially, a succession of rectangular decorative panels with geometrical, floral or animal motifs, unrelated except for their common strict symmetrical order. Some frequent vegetal designs are foliated scrolls or palmettes alternating with trefoil. All these designs can be punctuated with rounded bosses with a cross or a firewhirl, or other symbolic or animal motifs sculpted in higher relief. Until the twelfth century, the underside of the epistyle is generally adorned with symbolic designs (crosses or chrisma) or geometric patterns (lozenges or circles organized in panels) laid out to fit the setting of the colonnettes (Fig. 5).

Finally, from the tenth century on, the frames of mural icons situated on the north and south pillars flanking the sanctuary also become part of the templa.[17] As J.-P. Sodini already observed, the semi-circular shape of these frames, and sometimes also their decor of foliate scrolls and rounded bosses mirror the silver-leaf outline of the

(no. 156), another from the archaeological museum of Akşehir (no. 166), a piece found near St John in Ephesos (no. 296), a capital preserved in the archaeological museum of Uşak (no. 297), a capital from St. Sophia in Ohrid (no. 298), a piece found in Paşaköy, near Pergamon (no. 300), two capitals from the templon of the diakonikon of the Hosios Loukas monastery (no. 301), and a colonnette-capital in the archaeological museum of Konya (no. 302).
11 Dennert 1997, no. 314, 318; Pazaras 2001, fig. 50–51.
12 For instance one capital from the archaeological museum of Istanbul and another from the Corinth museum: Dennert 1997, no. 163 und 333.
13 Orlandos 1951, p. 178–214, no. 8, 10, 11.
14 Fayant and Chuvin 1997, p. 106–107.
15 The row of arches, used from Antiquity on, was also chosen as frame for the presentation of the Canon tables, s. Carl Nordenfalk, Die spätantiken Kanontafeln, Göteborg 1938, 2 vol., p. 121–126. More generally, the mystical aspect of the frame and decoration of the Canon tables has much in common with that of the sacred screen.
16 These patterns are for example carved on some epistyles preserved in the archaeological Museum of Smyrna, s. Orlandos 1937, fig. 21–25; Grabar 1976, pl. XIV a–b, no. 31–38.
17 The first known examples are dated from the 10th century: these are the plaster icon-frames from the templon of the Protaton monastery at Karyes in Mount Athos (Orlandos 1953, p. 89, fig. 1) and the fragmentary icon-frames of the templon of the Panagia church from the monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phokis (Boura 1980, drawing 3, fig. 168).

halo of the saintly figures represented on icons (Fig. 6).[18] The architectural shape and the whole ornamentation of these icon frames changed over the centuries and seems to reach its peak in the period that goes from the second half of the 12th century to the beginning of the 14th century. Double colonnettes, sometimes interrupted by a Knot of Herakles, and a very elaborate and skillfully carved arch framing the icon, like the one preserved on the south pillar of the sanctuary of the church dedicated to St. Panteleimon in Nerezi (Fig. 7), have replaced single colonnettes supporting a simple molding arch. S. Ćurčić has already pointed out the very important role of these proskynetaria icons, which focus the lay piety on the saint's cult in Middle Byzantine churches.[19] The special care that characterizes these carved frames also reflects the development of private devotion during this period.

## Spread and evolution of the ornamentation of the Middle and Late Byzantine templa preserved in Asia Minor, in Greece and in the Balkans

### 1. Constantinople : an absence of documentation

Very few sculptured elements of screens from the capital of the Byzantine Empire have been preserved. At the Kalenderhane Camii, a templon post and five fragmentary slabs were found, which could belong to a Middle Byzantine templon.[20] One of these slabs is decorated on both sides and some of the patterns are similar to those of the slabs of the templon and the lite of the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos,[21] and could be dated from the tenth century as U. Peschlow suggested. Better preserved are the two carved icon frames which date from the late-Comnenian reconstruction phase of the church (Fig. 8 a–b).[22] These frames have an unusual shape: their lower half is adorned with a pair of colonnettes crowned with capitals supporting a frieze of openwork floral motifs, punctuated by central designs (maybe crosses), now lost. This small construction supports two long pilasters with capitals that hold up an epistyle. The whole construction creates a contrasted play of red, green and white: the bases of the colonnettes are in red pudding stone, the colonnettes themselves and the pilasters in verde antico whereas the capitals and the epistyles are in Proconnesian marble.[23]

18 Sodini 1995, p. 293–294.
19 Slobodan Ćurčić, Proskynetaria icons, saint's tombs, and the development of the iconostasis, in: Alexei Lidov: The Iconostasis. Origins – Evolution – Symbolism, Moscow 2000, p. 134–142.
20 Peschlow 1997, p. 107, fig. 118–121.
21 Pazaras 2001, fig. 43, 86, 87, 92, 93.
22 Peschlow 1997, p. 104, fig. 88–93.
23 This contrast between the dark colours of the lower part of elements belonging to templa and the upper part in white marble was also used for the templa of the monasteries of Hosios Loukas and Daphni, s. Anastasios Orlandos, Νεώτερα ευρήματα εἰς τὴν Μονὴν Δαφνίου, in: Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος 8 (1955–56), p. 82; Schultz and Barnsley 1901, pl. 20.
If painted polychromy played an important role in the carved decoration of the templa (even if we don't know much about that, because of the lack of chemical analysis of pigments), the assemblage of colored stones should also be carefully observed. In the examples I mentioned dark supporting elements contrast with the ligther epistyle, which could have been painted.



The mastery with which the epistyles are carved makes of them remarkable works of art that, to this day, find no parallel elsewhere in the Empire. These icon frames are masterworks made by highly competent sculptors from Constantinople and distinguish themselves from the carved templa found in other provinces. They are marked out by their high level of technical mastery and by their reminder of Classical art achieved by the choice of certain motifs (acanthus leaves, rows of bead-and-reel) and by their structure (pilasters supporting an architrave instead of colonnettes supporting an arch). Comparable works are rare in the provinces. Other very elaborate icon frames preserved in Constantinople are those of the katholikon of the Chora Monastery (Kariye Djami), which are dated from the beginning of the fourteenth century.[24]

The representations of saintly figures on the templa are generally less frequent than geometrical floral motifs. These were probably technically easier to carve. Nevertheless, from the thirteenth and especially the fourteenth century on, figures carved in relief became more frequent than at earlier times, as if there was a renewed interest in classicising human representations. For instance, a fragment of an architrave from the Pammakaristos church (Fethiye Camii) carved with the bust of an apostle bears testimony to this tendency.[25] It could have belonged to a templon on which a Deesis was depicted. In the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, three blocks belonging to the same epistyle on which are carved the Christ and two angels also appear to date from the Late Byzantine period.[26]

### 2. Asia Minor

The study of the templa from this region leads to the conclusion that the production of carved marbles slows down from the twelfth century on. This phenomenon should probably be related to the victory of the Seljuk Turks at Mantzikert in 1071. But their production does not stop altogether: some reliefs are still carved in Ephesos[27] and the study of the archaeological material of the St. Nicholas church in Myra bears testimony to the activity of the monastery until the end of the twelfth century.[28]

For a start, I should point out three groups of scattered reliefs, which have been partially reconstructed. These are the reliefs of the two screens of the St. Nicholas church in Myra[29] (mid-11th century) and of the templon of Xanthos[30] (2nd half of the

24 Grabar 1976, pl. CVII, CX-a, no. 131.
25 Cyril Mango and Ernest J.W. Hawkins, Report on Field Work in Istanbul and Cyprus, 1962–1963, DOP 18 (1964), p. 332, fig. 30–31.
26 Gustave Mendel, Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines (Constantinople, Musée Impérial, 1912–1914), p. 496, no. 697–699; Reinhold Lange, Die byzantinische Reliefikone, Recklinghausen 1964, p. 104, fig. 36.
27 Dennert 1997, p. 224.
28 Yildiz Ötüken, Neue Aspekte zur Datierung der mittelbyzantinischen Bauplastik in Kleinasien, in: Charalambos Pennas and Catherine Vanderheyde, Actes du colloque sur la sculpture byzantine, Athènes 6–10 Sept. 2000 (in print).
29 Urs Peschlow, Die Architektur der Nikolaoskirche in Myra, in: Johannes Borchardt, Myra. Eine Lykische Metropole in antiker und byzantinischer Zeit, Istanbuler Forschungen 30 (1975), p. 220–229, fig. 3–4, pl. 42–43.
30 Sodini 1982, p. 119–148.

10th c. – 2nd half of the 11th C.). Among the motifs used on the Myra templa, the row of arches framing palmettes and the birds that grace the capitals should be pointed out. A slab bears two rectangular decorative panels similar to those on many Early Christian slabs, although their ornamentation differs. The fronts of the epistyles of the templa from Xanthos and from the church of Myra present identical geometrical compositions: a line of interlaced circles filled with rosettes or six-petaled flowers. The underside of these two epistyles also bears a design of geometrical panels with lozenges. The general composition of the front of the Xanthos epistyle is more elaborate than that of Myra: in the middle, a succession of arches serves as backdrop to three medallions representing a Deesis (Fig. 9).

Another important element the templa of Myra and Xanthos have in common should be noticed: on the top of the epistyle of the templon of the south-east chapel of the church of Myra and on that of the epistyle of the templon of Xanthos, holes were probably meant to secure a wooden panel on which icons were painted.[31] Anthropomorphic motifs standing above the epistyles were maybe already to be found in the Early Byzantine period. Although it's still difficult to prove, the height (21 to 37 cm) and the width (6 to 8 cm) of the ten reliefs from the Saint-Polyeuktos church in Constantinople depicting busts of the Christ, the Virgin and the apostles suggest that they could have occupied this position.[32] But it is only in the first half of the seventh century that we meet the first text which mentions images painted above the epistyle of a templon: a passage of the life of saint Artemios analyzed by C. Mango.[33] Images in other materials could occupy the same place as suggest the inlaid marble panel from the Vlatadon monastery in Thessaloniki[34] and the one made of painted ceramic tiles from Preslav[35], both dated from the 10th century. The ceramic icons of the twelve apostles, now in the Walters Art Museum, also clearly decorated the templon of an icon screen.[36] These icons did not stand above epistyle but were probably attached to the front of it. As very little material of this type has reached us or has been identified as such, it is difficult to define a chronological evolution of the iconography. It seems as though images of the Christ, the Virgin, the saints and the apostles could stand above the epistyles of templa even when their front was adorned with anthropomorphic representations, as the epistyle from the templon of Xanthos which bears a Deesis

31 Although a closer study of these holes would bring more information about their primary use, such holes could also have been used to hold lamps. The typikon of the Pantocrator monastery mentions "αἱ τοῦ τέμπλου κανδῆλαι πᾶσαι" and implies that icons on the top of the epistyle were lighted: Paul Gautier, Le typikon du Christ Pantokrator, in: Revue des Études Byzantines 32 (1974), p. 37, l. 142–143 and l. 148–151; Spieser 1999, p. 143–145, n. 58.
32 Nezih Firatli, La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée Archéologique d'Istanbul. Ed. by Catherine Metzger, Annie Pralong and Jean-Pierre Sodini, Paris 1990, p. 208–211, no. 485–492.
33 Cyril Mango, On the History of the Templon and the Martyrion of St. Artemios at Constantinople, in: Zographe 10 (1979), p. 40–43.
34 The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261. Ed. by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997, p. 43, no. 9.
35 Totju Totev, L'atelier de céramique peinte du monastère royal de Preslav, in: Cahiers Archéologiques 35 (1987), p. 65–78, esp. p. 73. For the suggestion about the location of this panel above an epistyle, see Spieser 1999, p. 137–138.
36 Gerstel 2001, p. 46–47 and 53–60.



seems to prove. It is only from the eleventh century on that it becomes the habit to set a representation of the Dodekaorton painted on a wooden panel above the epistyle of the templa, as J.-M. Spieser has shown, using the information contained in the typika of monasteries.[37]

The Deesis scene is widespread in the sculpture of Asia Minor.[38] This representation is for example to be seen on the fragmentary inlaid epistyle of the templon of the Sebasteia church in Phrygia: the central figures of the composition (Christ, the Virgin and John the Baptist) are flanked by four archangels, ten apostles and a saint (Eutychios).[39] The name of each figure is inscribed and the name of the donor (bishop Eustathios) is carved at the top of the front of the epistyle. Saintly figures and sometimes even small figurative scenes were carved on several epistyles from Asia Minor. As an example we can point out a fragmentary epistyle, decorated with a Theophany, reused as a lintel above a window of the Yildirim mosque at Edirne.[40]

If one considers all of the epistyles preserved in Asia Minor, unfortunately often isolated from their architectural context, it appears that rows of decorative panel compositions and rows of arches are dominant.[41] The spread of the so-called Asia Minor motif, consisting in a row of little arches framing acanthoid palmettes on the front of epistyles in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, has been analyzed by H. Buchwald.[42] This arcade motif also predominates on sarcophagi in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and continues to be present on the same material in the Palaeologan period.[43] Panel compositions, on the other hand, which can decorate the front or the underside of epistyles are so numerous and varied that it is difficult to classify them.[44]

37 Spieser 1999, p. 138–139.
38 Sodini 1995, esp. p. 294–295.
39 Nezih Firatli, Découverte d'une église byzantine à Sébaste de Phrygie, in : Cahiers Archéologiques 19 (1969), p. 151–166.
40 Y. Ötüken and R. Ousterhout, Notes on the Monuments of Turkish Thrace, in: Anatolian Studies 39 (1989), p. 122–125, fig. 1.
41 Rows of little arches or decorative compartments are found on many templa epistyles from the Dodecannesos islands, such as Rhodes (Anastasios Orlandos, Βυζαντινά γλυπτά της Ρόδου, in: Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος 6 (1948), fig. 166–167), Nisyros and Leros (Angeliki Katsioti and Eleni Papavasiliou, Μεσοβυζαντινή γλυπτική στη Λέρο και τη Νίσυρο, in: Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας 23 (2002), p. 121–148, fig. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18). The similarities between the motifs and the technique used on these reliefs and those found on the coast of Asia Minor suggest that they are the work of the same teams of sculptors, probably traveling craftsmen who worked in what appears as one geographical area.
42 Buchwald 1995, p. 233–276.
43 Pazaras 1988, p. 112–114.
44 I shall restrict myself to signal out a few significant examples, such as the epistyle from Anaia (modern day Kadikalesi), which sits today in the public park of Kuşadası, s. Natalia Poulou-Papadimitriou, Παλαιοχριστιανικά και μεσοβυζαντινά αρχιτεκτονικά γλυπτά από την Αναία, in: Η Βυζαντινή Μικρά Ασία, Εθνικό Ἵδρυμα Ερευνών/Ινστιτύτο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών, Athens 1998, p. 348–361, fig. 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 31, drawing 1. In general, the composition is frequently encountered on the epistyles of 11th century templa from Asia Minor, like those kept in the Izmir Museum, published by A. Orlandos (Orlandos 1937, fig. 24, no. 27–28–29, fig. 25, no. 30–33), and those from Didyma (Urs Peschlow, Didyma, MDAI (I) 25 (1975), p. 225–227, pl. 43 2–3, pl. 44 3–4), Kümbet, Afyonkarahisar, Pergamon and Yalvaç (Claudia Barsanti, Scultura anatolica di epoca mediobizantina, in: Milion 1. Studi e Ricerche d'Arte bizantina, Rome 1988, pl. II-3, III 2–3 and IV 1–2–3).

## 3. The Balkans

For lack of published meaningful examples, I shall not speak about the carved ornamentation from the regions of Bulgaria and Albania. Nevertheless, many examples of sculpted elements have been found in these areas, and it would be worthwhile to establish a catalogue of these fragments.[45] In the course of this paper, I will concentrate on the carved ornamentation of churches from Macedonia, which are better published. The elements belonging to the templa of this region are dated from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Among this material, fragments of the epistyles of St. Sophia and St. Nicholas in Ohrid decorated with an arcade motif should be pointed out.[46] A composition of arches is also to be found on the epistyles of the templon of the Virgin's church in Veljusa (Fig. 10).[47] The row of arches recalls the carved compositions of the epistyles of Asia Minor, but some motifs appear to be more specific to this region, such as the shape of the palmettes of the Veljusa epistyle,[48] the zoomorphic and vegetal patterns carved on elements belonging to the templa of the Holy Virgin at Drenovo and from St. Steven at Radoviš[49] the ornamental composition of palmettes flanking a saintly figure on an epistyle reused above the northern entrance of St. Sophia in Ohrid,[50] and the figure carved under an arch and the floral motifs on the underside of the epistyle of the templon of St. Sophia in Ohrid.[51]

In addition to the arcade motif, another frequent composition in this region is a floral frieze of alternating palmettes and lotus (Fig. 11).[52] The capitals of these templa present floral patterns mainly composed of palmettes and rosettes.[53] The post-colonnettes are generally graced with floral motifs, which may or may not be inscribed in interlaced circles,[54] crosses[55] or plaited motifs.[56] Next to the carving of ordinary ge-

45 In Bulgaria, the archaeological museums of cities such as Preslav and Messemvria bear testimony to the richness of this carved Byzantine material. In Albania, Middle Byzantine reliefs are to be found in the Archaeological Museum of Durrës, in some churches in the south of the country (Mesopotam and Episkopi), some of which are still being excavated, as in Saranda. The main results of these exavations are published in the periodical Canda via..

46 Filipova 1997, pl. CVIII-3; Filipova 1998, fig. 1 a–b and 2 a–b.

47 These epistyles with arcade motif have been brought together in a study of Filipova 1998, p. 83–93.

48 Filipova 1997, pl. LXXVI-1 and CXXVII 1–2b. Curiously, these palmettes are close in shape to those carved on the templon of the Metropolis of Mistra, s. Filipova 1998, fig. 6–7 and Millet 1910, pl. 45–2.

49 Filipova 1997, pl. XCVIII-1,4,5,6, pl. C-3,5, pl. CV-1a,1b,4a,4b, pl. CVI.

50 Filipova 1998, fig. 5.

51 Filipova 1997, pl. CXXIV-4.

52 This motif is to be found for instance on the epistyle of the templon of the Church of the Forty Martyrs at Bansko and of the Church of Saint Panteleimon at Nerezi, s. Filipova 1997, pl. LXXXI and LXXXII-1,2; Ida Sinković, The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi. Architecture, Programme, Patronage, Wiesbaden 2000, 151, pl. LXVIII.

53 Filipova 1997, pl. LXXVI, 1–2, LXXXIII-2, CII-3, CIV-2, CIX-1, 2b, 3, CXXVII-2a.

54 See for examples the post-colonnettes of the templa of St. Sophia in Ohrid and of the church dedicated to the Virgin at Drenovo (Filipova 1997, pl. CV 1a–b, CVII 1a–c; Grabar 1976, pl. XLI a–d).

55 See for example the fragmentary post-colonnettes of the church of St. Achilleus at Lake Prespa (Filipova 1997, pl. CVII 2a–b).

56 This pattern can be seen on the posts of St. Clement and of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi, s. Sinković 2000, fig. 77; Filipova 1997, pl. CV 3–5.



ometrical and interlaced designs on slabs,[57] the intrusion of zoomorphic motifs on some examples should be emphasized. The fight of an eagle with a snake or with a hare can be observed for instance on the templa of the churches of Morodvis,[58] of St. Sophia (Fig. 12) and St. Clement at Ohrid,[59] or of the church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi.[60] On the subject of this last templon, it is worth pointing out that the two icon frames (Fig. 7) were made of plaster, unlike the rest of the templon which is in marble. The appearance of plaster as a material used for making templa is not an isolated phenomenon: A. Orlandos had already observed that the icon frames of the church of the monastery of Protaton on Mount Athos were made of plaster and pointed out that some templa in plaster were preserved in Kostaniani and Mospina. In the regions of Arta and Ioannina, many fragments of plaster templa, most of them unpublished, dating from around 1200 have indeed been preserved.[61] This technique should probably be related to the lack of marble quarries in these regions, although it does not always explain the use of plaster.[62] In some important foundations directly related to the art of Constantinople, like the katholika of the monasteries of Vatopedi on Mount Athos,[63] of Daphni in Athens,[64] of Hosios Loukas in Phokis[65] and of the Panagia Kosmosoteira in Thrace,[66] plaster and marble are used together for the architectural decoration. Even in provincial churches, like the one in Samaria near Kalamata, plaster is used for the window frame even though the templon is in marble.[67]

57 For instance the slabs from the churches of Veljusa, Bansko and Morodvis, s. Filipova 1997, pl. LXXV, LXXVI-3, LXXXI, LXXXII 3a–b, LXXXIX 1–3, XC 4–6.

58 Filipova 1997, pl. CXIII 2–3.

59 Birds on either side of a Latin cross are carved on the slabs, while the epistyle is adorned with a mixed animal and floral design that depicts a foliated scroll inhabited with birds pecking at grapes, s. Filipova 1997, pl. LXXXIII-2, CII-1,4, pl. CIV-1a–b, 3, pl. CXXIX.

60 Sinković 2000, fig. 76, 77, 78.

61 Catherine Vanderheyde, La sculpture architecturale mésobyzantine en Épire du Xe au XIIIe siècle (doctoral thesis, Université de Paris I) Paris 1996, esp. 36–37, 57, 92–93, cat. no. 10–20, 72–73, 97–101; Idem, La sculpture architecturale byzantine dans le thème de Nikopolis du Xe au début du XIIIe siècle (Epire, Etolie-Acarnanie et sud de l'Albanie), Supplément au BCH 45, Athènes 2005, p. 83–87.

62 Catherine Vanderheyde, Γλυπτά σε δεύτερη χρήση στην Ἤπειρο, in: 17ο Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινῆς καὶ Μεταβυζαντινῆς Αρχαιολογίας καὶ Τέχνης, Πρόγραμμα Περιλήψεις Εἰσηγήσεων καὶ Ανακοινώσεων, Athens 1997, p. 77–78; Barbara Papadopoulou, Βυζαντινά γύψινα ανάγλυφα από την Ἤπειρο, in: 21ο Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινῆς καὶ Μεταβυζαντινῆς Αρχαιολογίας καὶ Τέχνης, Πρόγραμμα Περιλήψεις Εἰσηγήσεων καὶ Ανακοινώσεων, Athens 2001, p. 74.

63 Plaster is used for different kinds of architectural elements, such as cornices, window lunettes and window stiles, s. Pazaras 2001, p. 33, 58–61, 120, 122–123, fig. 24–25, 73–78, 103–108, drawings 10 a–b, 22 a–d.

64 Orlandos 1953, p. 89, f. no. 4.

65 The dome's corniche and the window frames, s. Schultz and Barnsley 1901, p. 26, pl. 28–29.

66 A. Orlandos, Τὰ βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Βήρας, in: Θρακικά 4 (1933): 17, fig. 7; Stefan Sinos, Die Klosterkirche der Kosmosoteira in Bera (Vira), in: Byzantinisches Archiv 16, München 1985, esp. p. 93, 97–101, fig. 40–45.

67 Bouras and Boura 2002, p. 291–295, fig. 461.

## 4. Greece

Templa and other elements belonging to similar structures found in Greece are more numerous than in other regions. The use of this material is now well known thanks to recent publications by several Greek scholars. The material from central Greece and the Peloponnese offers the best guide to retrace the evolution of the decor of templa. The examples I propose to analyze therefore come mainly from these two regions.

### 4.1. The rare testimonies from the ninth century

The templon of the church of Skripou in Boeotia, which is well known from the reconstruction proposed by A.H.S. Megaw,[68] is one of the rare dated examples from the ninth century. Thanks to the inscriptions set into the walls of the church, we know that the work on the templon began in 873/4 under the impulse of Leon the Protospatharius.[69] The decorative composition covers the entire surface of each of the preserved reliefs. Each slab presents a décor on both sides made up of a central cross flanked, on the front side, by birds and small animals, perhaps hares, and on the back side, by floral motifs and circles enclosing crosses and rosettes. The posts flanking these slabs are mainly adorned with floral motifs inscribed in circles. Interestingly, the posts of the Saint Paul chapel are decorated on the side facing the sanctuary with compositions which recall the decoration of Early Christian chancel slabs.[70] The epistyle is ornamented on the front, the underside and the backside. A faultless symmetry is observed in all the decorative compositions. A cross topped by an arch or a foliate cross forms the central motive of the epistyles; as secondary motifs, geometric floral or animal compositions are to be found.

### 4.2. The tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries: the rise and bloom of material and motifs

The templa of some churches offer good examples of the decorative influence exerted by the capital on the provinces, even if very few Middle Byzantine templa are preserved in Constantinople.[71] On the contrary, the templon of the Episkopi church dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin (on the island of Santorini), dated from 1181 thanks

68 Megaw 1966, p. 1–32.
69 Nicolas Oikonomidès, Pour une nouvelle lecture des inscriptions de Skripou en Béotie, in : Travaux et Mémoires 12 (1994), p. 479–485.
70 The posts of the Bema section and of the Chapel of St. Paul are decorated with a design of overlapping scales or intersecting and tangent circles which create a motif of crosses with almond-shaped branches, s. Megaw 1966, pl. 3-i, 6 and 7.
71 The different elements of the templon of the katholikon of the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos for instance, which is dated by Th. Pazaras to the end of the 10th c. – 1st half of the 11th c., are decorated with ornamental motifs that are frequently to be found on reliefs from Constantinople and Asia Minor. On the front of the epistyle were carved a row of arches framing palmettes punctuated with cabochons; its underside bears a compartmented composition made up of several decorative panels similar to examples found in these places. Different techniques were skillfully combined on the elements of this templon : undercut carving, champlevé, high and low relief, s. Pazaras 2001, p. 35–47, fig. 32–55, drawings 12–13.



to the dedicatory inscription,[72] is carved in a technique which differs completely from that one used on the other templa. It's the only preserved entire templon executed in champlevé: the cutout background was filled with colored materials on which the carved motifs stood out (Fig. 13). However, the ornamental compositions (arches, quatrefoil) and the shape of the palmettes recall the motifs carved on reliefs from the West coast of Asia Minor and from the islands which lie off it.

The material preserved in central Greece allows us to reconstruct an evolution of the shape and the carved patterns of templa during the tenth until to the twelfth centuries. Let's begin with the marble templon of the church of the Panagia in the monastery of Hosios Loukas. This templon, from which only the profiled stylobate and the epistyles are almost intact,[73] bears a unique carved decoration. These epistyles are decorated on the front and the underside with a stylized floral ornamentation, symmetrically ordered, and organized in rectangular panels. L. Boura has proposed a reconstruction of the original templon based on the isolated sculpted elements still preserved (Fig. 14). The entirety of the structure and its ornamentation offers an exceptional example of the combination of influences that can be found in templa. The Corinthian capitals recall the Greco-Roman past, whereas the other carved motifs, very two-dimensional in style, are rather of an orientalizing type. An example of this are the sinuous palmettes and half-palmettes on the epistyles and the floral kufesque ornamentation on the slabs and the icon-frames. Only the lozenges carved on the slabs belong to the stock motifs of Middle Byzantine ornamentation. The different techniques – chip-carving, champlevé and undercut carving – and the painted polychromy to be found on this templon reveal the skill of the sculptors (Fig. 15).

Let us have a closer look at the origin and spread of kufesque patterns on carved elements. This specific decor is not part of the traditional ornamental repertoire of Byzantine art where floral, geometrical and zoomorphic motifs sit side by side. Events in Byzantine history seem to have caused their appearance on sculpture shortly after the Arab pirate raids in the Aegean during the ninth and tenth centuries.[74] This motif spread also to other artistic media, such as monumental painting, ceramics and miniatures.[75] It seems to have been adopted mainly in the eastern part of the Greek continent: its concentration is indeed higher on reliefs found in Attika, the Argolid, the Peloponnesus, on the island of Euboia and Mount Pelion. It is found more sporadically in the north of Greece. The absence of kufesque patterns on Byzantine reliefs from Epirus and Aetolia-Akarnania shows that the regions in the vicinity of the eastern Greek coast seem to have been more open to these influences. This ornamentation can

72 Orlandos 1951, p. 178–214.
73 This templon was destroyed by the Turks in 1823, during the Greek independence war. In 1863, it was restored using only part of the original templon, the most damaged elements (i.e. the chancel slabs and the post-colonnettes) being replaced by reused ones or by newly carved reliefs, s. Boura 1980, p. 81–82.
74 Concerning Arab pirate raids in the Aegean during this period, s. Kenneth. M. Setton, On the raids of the Moslems in the Aegean in the ninth and tenth centuries and their alleged occupations of Athens, in: AJA 58 (1954), p. 311–319.
75 See the different examples published by George Miles, Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area, in: DOP 18 (1964), p. 31–32, fig. 90–94.

also be found on certain epistyles, such as that of the templon of the church of St. Luke at Aliveri, on Euboia.[76] As this church was a dependency of the monastery of St. Luke in Phokis, it can be supposed that the carved decor of its late tenth century church, dedicated to the Virgin, may have had an influence on the ornamental compositions the sculptors chose to carve in Euboia in the first quarter of the eleventh century. Also in Euboia, the same type of motifs is to be found at the ends of another templon epistyle from the church of the monastery of the Peribleptos Virgin at Politika. According to Ch. Bouras, this building could be another dependency of the monastery of St. Luke in Phokis.[77] This would explain the use of similar motifs. At Corinth, pseudo-kufic and other motifs adorn two epistyles (Fig. 16).[78] Kufesque patterns could also compose the main ornamental composition of the epistyles.[79] A more isolated example that bears testimony to the spread of this motif in northern Greece is the epistyle of the templon of the church of St. Anargyroi at Kastoria.[80] This church is the only one of the town to have been decorated with sculpture. In addition to the pseudo-kufic motifs, far-removed from their original model and systematically crowned with a trefoiled element, there are also zoomorphic motifs, such as griffins and peacocks flanking the fountain of life. Trees and more banal motifs (crosses and rosettes), carved in high relief punctuate the composition. Let's also mention a post belonging to the templon of St. Sophia in Ohrid with a kufesque element carved on the top of its main face.[81]

The templon of the katholikon of the monastery of Hosios Loukas, which is dated from the first third of the eleventh century (Fig. 17), is composed of three epistyles decorated with various geometric, floral and animal motifs, some of which stand out in high relief. On these pieces, we can observe the use of the technique of carving in two levels of relief which will become frequent from the twelfth century on, especially in central Greece and in the Peloponnese.[82] The upper part of the epistyle of the central

76 Anastasios Orlandos, Τὸ παρὰ τὸ Ἀλιβέρι μετόχιον τοῦ Ὁσίου Λουκᾶ Φωκίδος, in: Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων της Ἑλλάδος 7 (1951), p. 131–145, fig. 1–3.

77 Orlandos 1937bis, p. 175–184; Charalambos Bouras, Παρατηρήσεις στὸ καθολικὸ τῆς μονῆς τῆς Θεοτόκου Περιβλέπτου στὰ Πολιτικὰ Ευβοίας, in: Εταιρεία Ευβοϊκῶν Σπουδῶν 28 (1988–1989), p. 53–62, esp. 60–62, drawings 1, 2-b, fig. 2.

78 Robert Scranton, Mediaeval architecture in the central area of Corinth, in: Corinth 16 (1957), p. 121, no. 177, no. 179, pl. 35. One of these epistyles belonged to the templon of the Bema church; the pseudo-kufic pattern that adorned it is far removed from its original model. On the architectural sculpture from the Bema church, s. Vanderheyde 2000. Mrs Ettinghausen told me that on the other epistyle (fig. 16), the kufic-inscription clearly signifies "Allah". Considering its place, on the front of an epistyle, its meaning is not a coincidence. I thank her very much for this very useful information.

79 See the examples preserved in the area of the church of Politika on Euboia (Orlandos 1937bis, fig. 8) and a fragment of epistyle from the monastery of Sagmata in Beotia (Boyatzis, 1996–97, pl. 133-a).

80 Grabar 1976, pl. XXI-c, no. 46; Nicolas K. Moutsopoulos, Εκκλησίες της Καστοριάς 9ος–11ος αιώνας, in: Βυζαντινά μνημεία της δυτικῆς Μακεδονίας (1992), p. 343–344, fig. 319–326.

81 Grabar 1976, pl. XLI-d, no. 69.

82 Boura 1977–79, p. 63–72. As L. Boura has clearly shown, the same technical and stylistical characteristics are to be found on many elements belonging to the templa from central Greece, the Peloponnese and the island of Andros. Ornamental compositions which combine high- and low-reliefs, punctuated by drill-holes, can indeed be found on epistyles from the templa of churches from all these regions: in the monastery of Hosios Meletios on Mount Citheron in Beoetia, in the church of the Archangels in Mesaria, actually preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Andros, on another example from Alepospita in Phthiotide (Thessaly), recently published by Ch. Bouras (Bouras and Boura 2002, p. 57–60, fig.



apse's templon was initially meant to support an element that has disappeared[83]. The center of the front of the epistyle is marked by a cabochon on which a cross must have been depicted. On either side of this central motive are two rectangular panels bearing a row of interlaced circles that recall a panel-composition widely used in Asia Minor. They are flanked by three isolated motifs: a cabochon, an arch over a floral motive, and a griffin (Fig. 18). The underside is covered with a geometric-floral composition inserted in compartments. The epistyles of the prothesis and the diakonikon are adorned with different designs – arches on the one hand (Fig. 19), and geometric panels-compositions on the other (Fig. 20) – but they were both crowned with a rectangular slab with an openwork composition of interlaced circles. On the slab of the prothesis, depictions of animals are still faintly visible. The underside of these epistyles are graced with different geometric-floral motifs ; on that of the prothesis a chrisma inscribed in a concave circle is to be seen.

In general, there is a strong contrast between, on the one hand, the overload of decorative motifs which characterizes the epistyles and the use of differing motifs on the capitals like on every panel, and, on the other hand, the sober ornamentation of the post-colonnettes, restricted to a simple molding. The most noteworthy innovation in the decor of the epistyles seems to be the intrusion of zoomorphic creatures at each end of the central epistyle, a position that bestows on these supernatural beings the role of guardians of the sanctuary (Fig. 18).

The templon of the katholikon of the Hosios Loukas monastery seems to have had an influence on the decoration and the carving technique of the templa of central Greece and the Peloponnese in the twelfth century. For instance, the epistyles of the templon of the church of the Transfiguration of the Savior at Amphissa (1st quarter of the 12th c.) bear zoomorphic and floral motifs that stand out in high relief (Fig. 21).[84] Among the reliefs belonging to this templon, I should point out two posts flanked by a jamb topped by a hand holding a knob, the whole structure carved in the same block of marble. This motive is also found in some templa of central Greece and the

37). In this same geographical area, the work of the same sculptor-workshops has started to be identified at various building-sites. The team of sculptors which carried out the templon of the katholikon of the Zoodochos Pigis monastery at Samari, near Kalamata, at the turn of the 12th and 13th c., probably also carved the elements belonging to the templa preserved in the churches of St. Sophia and Saint Demetrios in Mistra and in the church of the Panagia in Nomia in the Mani. On the fragmentary epistyle belonging to this last templon, s. Drandakis 2002, p. 253–254, no. 21, fig. 384. By comparing the ornamentation of the templon of the first period of the monastery of Sagmata and the motifs carved on the templon of the church of Georgoula at Monemvasia, we can see that the epistyles and the slabs present the same patterns and a similar technique, so that we can suggest that the same sculptors carved these reliefs, s. Boyatzis 1996–97, p. 303–332, pl. 121, 132-γ; Monemvasia. Artefacts – Environment – History – The Archaeological Collection, Athens, Archaeological Receipts Fund, 2001, p. 30–31, fig. 31.

83 Schultz and Barnsley 1901, pl. 22–23. It could have been a wooden panel with a representation of scenes from the Dodekaorton.

84 Anastasios Orlandos, Ὁ παρὰ τὴν Ἄμφισσαν ναὸς τοῦ Σωτῆρος, in: Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος 1 (1935), p. 181–196. A reconstitution of this templon has been published by Klimis Aslanidis and Christina Pinatsi, Το τέμπλο του ναού της Μεταμορφώσεως του Σωτήρος στην Άμφισσα, in: 19ο Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινῆς καὶ Μεταβυζαντινῆς Αρχαιολογίας καὶ Τέχνης, Πρόγραμμα Περιλήψεις Εισηγήσεων καὶ Ανακοινώσεων, Athens 1999, p. 12–13.

Peloponnese.[85] At first sight it recalls the hands carved between the capitals and the top of the columns of the Arch of Theodosius in Constantinople. But it should rather be compared with applied silver ornaments from the second half of the sixth century, which had a very similar shape and adorned the ends of the arms of thrones.[86] The use of marble as a replacement for enamel, silver or ivory is a well-attested phenomenon in many architraves of Middle Byzantine templa that depict a scene of the Deesis.[87] The motive of the hand holding a knob shows that other strategic places of the templon –i.e. the limits of the main entrance to the sanctuary – could be adorned with motifs inspired by precious metal. Another motif, the cross crowned by an arch, that decorated the epistyle of the templon from Amphissa will also know a local diffusion and be carved in high relief on many twelfth century epistyles from this region. It came to be systematically carved in the middle of epistyles and lintels between the narthex and the naos, as this pattern signaled the passage to a sacred space.[88] Above the posts of the templon from Amphissa stood fasciculated colonnettes knotted at mid-height.

### 4.3. A special case : the Mani

The region of the Mani in the Peloponnese constitutes a special case in the evolution of the Middle Byzantine architectural sculpture. From the tenth century on, this region witnesses a busy building activity that is accompanied by a significant sculptural production[89]. The area of activity of the workshop of the sculptor Niketas Marmaras, who worked in the last third of the eleventh century, has been well studied by N. Drandakis.[90] Many epistyles decorated with arches crowned by palmettes punctuated by bosses are signed by this sculptor. Not only the name of this sculptor, but also the date of execution and the names of the donors appear on the elements of certain templa. A chancel slab, reused as an altar in the St. Nicholas church of the village of Milea, bears witness to this. Nicetas, the name of the sculptor, is engraved on it as well as the names of the donors: Staninas and Pothos, son of Sirakos.[91] Another sculptor is known in the same region, at the same time: the mastoras Georgios, whose name is engraved on the epistyle kept in the court of the monastery dedicated to the Phaneromeni situated near the village of Frangoulias. The inscription also mentions the donators, among which a monk, as well as the date of the templon.[92]

85 Catherine Vanderheyde, Un motif insolite sur les piliers de templa, in: Byzantion 69 (1999), p. 165–177.

86 Cat. Rome 2000, no. 122–123 (Kenneth S. Painter). I thank Véronique Somers who gave me this information.

87 Sodini 1995, p. 289–311.

88 This motif is for example carved on the lintel of the central door of the narthex to the naos and on the epistyle of the templon of the church of the Hosios Meletios monastery, s. Bouras and Boura 2002, fig. 263, 485.

89 In his monograph on the Byzantine sculpture from the Mani, N. Drandakis published the drawings of more than 20 carved templa from the 11th and 12th c., s. Drandakis 2002.

90 Nicolas B. Drandakis, Νικήτας μαρμαρᾶς, in: Dodone 1 (1972), p. 21–44 ; Id., Ἄγνωστα γλυπτὰ τῆς Μάνης ἀποδιδόμενα στὸ μαρμαρᾶ Νικήτα ἢ στὸ ἐργαστήρι του, in: Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας 4 (1975–1976), p. 19–27.

91 As A. Avraméa has pointed out, these people were christianized Slavs whose means were sufficient to employ a sculptor of the region to embellish their foundation, see Anna Avramea, Le Magne byzantin : problèmes d'histoire et de topographie, in : ΕΥΨΥΧΙΑ. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler, Byzantina Sorboniensia 16, Paris 1998, p. 57.



Many of the twelfth century templa present unusual elements, such as an arch signaling the main entrance to the sanctuary (Fig. 22).[93] It's worth pointing out that no anthropomorphic motifs are to be found, whereas zoomorphic motifs in high relief – like griffins, lions, dogs, isolated peacocks or peacocks flanking the fountain of life, eagles with open or closed wings, griffins or lions grasping a crumbling animal (often a hare) – become quite frequent on epistyles from the twelfth century on, as can be seen on contemporary templa of central Greece and the Peloponnese.

### 4.4. The thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries: a tendency towards decorative overload or stereotyped series of ornaments

Although only few examples have been preserved, the remains of templa of Constantinople[94] and Mistra bear testimony to the fact that this liturgical structure in marble is still in use in the fourteenth century and it is only progressively, and mainly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on, that monumental wooden iconostasis will be systematically produced.[95]

Based on the preserved examples from Greece dating to this period, two tendencies can be distinguished which correspond to two geographical areas.

1. In the Peloponnese, the carved decor of the templa is characterized by an accumulation of motifs that gives an impression of overload of the entire ornamental design. This tendency can be seen for instance on the templon from the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Apidia (Fig. 23).[96] Sometimes the structure of the templon itself contributes to this overload feeling: the templon of the bema of the church of St. Demetrios in Mistra was built with three different epistyles put on top of each other.[97] The colonnettes of the templon of the prothesis of the same church

92 Nicolas B. Drandakis, Ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ τοῦ μαρμάρινου τέμπλου στὴ Φανερωμένη τῆς Μέσα Μάνη (1079), in : Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς 1979, p. 218–225.

93 An arch crones the main entrance of te templon in the church of the Transfiguration at Nomitzi (Fig. 22) and in the churches of Episkopi and Agitria; each of these arches offers a specific carved ornamentation, s. Drandakis 2002, fig. 328–331, 407–408, 417–418, 420. Certain types of capitals are also quite unusual, such as those decorated with bunches of grapes and palmettes (Saint Nicholoas at Kabinari of Platsa, churches of the Dormition at Kastanea and Milea), those with a double tier of acanthus leaves (St Nicholas at Charia) or two superposed tiers, one with acanthus leaves and one with flat leaves (St Peter at Kastanea), s. Drandakis 2002, fig. 340–343, 456, 437, 370, 271–272.

94 For instance, a fragment of an epistyle from the Pammakaristos church (Fethiye Camii) on which is carved the bust of an apostle, three blocks belonging to the same epistyle on which are carved Christ and two angels preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, se footnote no. 26.

95 Jean-Pierre Sodini, La sculpture byzantine (VIIe–XIIe s.) : acquis, problèmes et perspectives, in: Charalambos Pennas and Catherine Vanderheyde, Actes du colloque sur la sculpture byzantine, Athènes 6 – 10 Sept. 2000 (in print); Ch. M. Koutelakis, Ξυλογλύπτα τέμπλα της Δωδεκανήσου μέχρι το 1700 (1986).

96 Orlandos 1935, p. 125–138.

97 Georgia Marinou, Ἅγιος Δημήτριος. Η Μητρόπολη του Μυστρά, Δημοσιεύματα του αρχαιολογικού δελτίου 78, Athens 2002, p. 79–87, pl. 55–62; Millet 1910, pl. 45.

offer a complex shape: it is fasciculated and interrupted by two knots of Herakles.[98] An epistyle from the Erechteion, preserved in the Byzantine museum of Athens,[99] well illustrates this tendency: a row of motifs, with no apparent link are carved in low- and high-relief, creating a composition lacking any symmetry (Fig. 24). One should point out the unusual presence of the dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, which is usually to be found in relation with the baptism of Christ. The important number of figurative motifs and their realistic representation is due to a western influence, which can be explained by the Frankish occupation of Athens form 1204 to 1311.

The use of several carving techniques on the same relief becomes more systematic an further increases the overloaded impression of the composition. The undercut technique is particularly well mastered[100]. These tendencies were already perceptible in the decor of some templa of the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries, such as that of the katholikon of the monastery of the Zoodochos Pigis in Samari near Kalamata where the griffins and their prey are represented in frozen poses which recall heraldic emblems (Fig. 25). As L. Boura has observed, the simplified ornamentation to be found on the underside of the epistyle of this templon, which is only decorated with circles filled with inlaid motifs, is part of a general trend and testifies to the gradual abandonment of carved decor at this place[101]. This evolution is related to the introduction of icons, which hide this part of the templon.

2. In Thessaly[102] and in the north of Greece,[103] we can observe a great stylization of the ornamental floral designs, which are carved in a very repetitive manner (Fig. 26). The use of the champlevé technique, which contributes to a two-dimensional perception of the carved ornamentation surrounded by a colored background, becomes more widespread and also appears on other liturgical elements, such as ambos and funerary sculpture. The over ornamentation of Paleologan templa reveals a general trend that can also be seen in the ecclesiastical architecture of the period, which is characterized by the proliferation of annexed chapels or the expansion of earlier structures.[104] More precisely, the two opposite tendencies seen on Greek templa reflect an evolution, which characterizes the sculptural technique specific to each of these regions. In the north of Greece, the sculptural workshops steadily

98 Millet 1910, pl. 45-3. The same architectural pattern (colonnette with two knots) appears in painting of the Late Byzantine period, like in the church of St. Athanasios in Kastoria for instance.

99 Maria Sklavou-Mavroeidi, Γλυπτά του βυζαντινού μουσείου Αθηνών, Athens 1999, p. 180–181, no. 250.

100 The reconstruction of the templon of the Pantanassa church at Arta in Epiros (end of the 13th c.) proposed by A. Orlandos bears witness to this: one of the slabs, decorated with lions and a plaited ribbon describing a knotted circle with four interlaces, was undercut. Moreover, the supports of this templon had an unusual shape: posts with fasciculated colonnettes interrupted by a plaited knot at mid-height, s. Anastasios Orlandos, Ἡ Παρηγορήτισσα τῆς Ἄρτης, Athens 1963, fig. 114, 115, 116, 118.

101 Boura 1977–79, p. 63–72.

102 See for instance the templon of the Porta Panagia (fig. 2): Orlandos 1935bis, p. 181–196, fig. 14, 18.

103 See for instance the carved epistyle of the templon of St. Nicholas Orphanos (1310–1320) : Liveri 1996, fig. 2–5, drawing 1.

104 Robert Ousterhout, Master Builders of Byzantium, Princeton 1999, esp. p. 107–116.



acquired a better mastery of the champlevé technique which was combined with inlaid colored materials. This technique, which emphasizes the two dimensional aspects of the decor and based on color contrasts, allows for a gentle transition with the painted decoration of the templa, which becomes more developed in this period. Champlevé is also used at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries for carving other liturgical elements such as the ambos of Ohrid and of Verria, which Th. Pazaras attributes on good grounds to the same workshop.[105] In Central Greece and in the Peloponnese, carved templa are characterized by a search for plasticity, and the use of mixed techniques. This tendency is the outcome of an evolution whose origin lies in the carved decor of the churches of the monastery of Hosios Loukas.

These two tendencies, to which can be added a taste for high-relief in the carving of saintly figures on the epistyles preserved in Constantinople, thus represent the ultimate modes of expression used in carving before wood replaced marble as the material for making iconostases.

## Conclusion

The study of templa from Constantinople, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece shows that their carved decor varies widely. Alongside a unity of material, namely marble, the examples presented here reveal a decor and a technique of execution, which follow a regional evolution. Except for rows of arches, rows of interlaced circles or squares, and compositions with decorative panels, which are to be found all over, regional tendencies are noticeable less in the general compositions as in the ornamental details. There does not appear to be a real "decorative program" imposed by the capital, although the scarcity of preserved archaeological material from Constantinople should deter us from drawing hasty conclusions.

The blossoming of ornamentation, which characterizes Byzantine sculpture, is also perceptible in other domains of Byzantine art but the space awarded to the ornamentation varies according to the technique. On frescoes, mosaics and manuscript miniatures, it all at once rhythms, splits up and frames the figurative compositions or the text. On the other hand, in the luxury crafts and in sculpture, ornamental motifs are the main focus. Since the carved decoration serves mainly to embellish the templa, namely the material transition between the terrestrial world and the sacred space, the sculptors were allowed a great deal of liberty in their choice of ornamental compositions. This explains why it is so difficult to identify different works by the same teams of sculptors. Even in small areas like the Mani, the use of unusual decorative patterns and structural forms seems to find its origin mainly in the sculptor's choice, possibly influenced in some cases by the donor's wishes. It is also in this region that the greatest number of dedicatory inscriptions is found on templa; they reveal the private nature

105 Theocharis Pazaras, Reliefs of a sculpture workshop operating in Thessaly and Macedonia at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, in: Recueil des rapports du IVe colloque serbo-grec (Belgrade 1985), Belgrade 1987, p. 159–183.

of most of the foundations. In the other regions of the empire, dedicatory inscriptions are also to be found and sometimes a date is engraved, but most of the inscriptions are either Christian formula or serve to identify saintly figures.

This overview of the carved decoration of the middle and late Byzantine templa has shown that specific vocabularies of ornament are used on the templa of the different areas of the empire. Floral patterns knew a wide diffusion on the templa from Constantinople and Macedonia. Abstract motifs, like pseudo-kufic patterns, are used during a relatively short period of time (in the late 10th c. and during the 11th c.) and in a limited area (mainly in the East of the Greek continent). Abstract geometrical compositions were also very often carved on the templa of Asia Minor. At the same time, figural motifs played an important role in the decorative repertoire of the templa of Asia Minor and Constantinople. The Deesis or the expanded Deesis (with the addition of angels, apostles and saints) seems to have been the most popular subject on epistyles, especially from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. As Sharon Gerstel has shown, the Deesis also decorated painted tiles from Constantinople or its surrounding region and this medium, like inlaid marble, could have imitated works in enamel or metal used in the most lavish churches.[106] In Greece and the Balkans, carved anthropomorphic figures on templa do not appear as widespread. Only one example, dated from the ninth century and preserved in the archaeological Museum of Thebes,[107] was decorated with an expanded Deesis.[108] Other anthropomorphic motifs, such as the Virgin Orans flanked by two Archangels, are carved on part of the beautiful epistyle of the templon of the Blacherna church at Arta (Fig. 27). This type of decoration, which was probably carved during the beginning of the Despotate of Epiros, must be related to Constantinopolitan models, since the Despots wanted to compete with the splendors of the imperial capital. Almost contemporary with this work are the anthropomorphic figures carved in high relief on the icon frames of the Kalenderhane Camii.

On the other hand, the zoomorphic stock of figures seems to be more widely spread. In Macedonia we can observe the carved animals offer sometimes a grimacing face.[109] From the ninth century on,[110] this zoomorphic and theranthropic repertoire appears particularly developed in Central Greece and the Peloponnese, in comparison with the other regions of the Empire. Special care is awarded to the carving of the plumage of the birds and of the coat of the animals, which are 'the pretext' of a blossoming of fine ornamental patterns. The position of these carved animals becomes more and more stylized. The most frequent motifs on templa epistyles are a lion, a griffin, an eagle with open wings, peacocks flanking the fountain of life or the cross, the combat of an eagle,

106 Gerstel 2001, p. 43–65, esp. p. 57.

107 Anastasios Orlandos, Γλυπτὰ τοῦ μουσείου Θηβῶν, in : Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος 5 (1939–40), p. 126–127, fig. 7–8.

108 On the importance of this town during the mediaeval period, s. Aspasia Louvi-Kizi, Thebes, in: Angeliki E. Laiou (ed.-in-chief), The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century, vol. 2, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C. 2002, p. 631–638.

109 See for instance the reliefs of the church of the holy Virgin in Drenovo: Filipova 1997, pl. XCVIII 1–2.

110 On the reliefs of the church of Skripou in Boeotia dated from 873–74 are already carved animals and theranthropic creatures, s. Megaw 1966, pl. 1 a–b, 2 a–b–c, 4 a–d–e



a lion or a griffin with a hare (Fig. 28) or a deer. Other representations such as isolated animals, like a dog or a hare, certain scenes, like the combat of an eagle with a snake, peacocks with interlaced necks or female sphinxes flanking a tree or the fountain of life (Fig. 29), are more rarely carved at this place. In view of their position (at the extremities of the epistyles or on slabs of the templa), I believe that these zoomorphic motifs should undeniably be related to symbolic meanings linked to eternity and the immortality of the soul (especially the peacock, an isolated eagle or eagles flanking the tree or the fountain of life) or to the victory of good over evil (fighting animals). This symbolic repertoire should have been particularly significant for the local residents. Around 1200, this type of symbolic representation, carved almost in the round with ornamental details, seems to reach its peak. During the thirteenth century, it becomes more common on carved sarcophagus slabs,[111] whereas the templa are then decorated with repetitive floral motifs better suited to set off the pictures painted on wooden panels set above the epistyles of the templa, whose iconography was strongly related to the liturgy.

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## List of Abbreviations

Boura 1977–79 = Laskarina Boura, Architectural Sculpture of the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries in Greece, in: Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας 9 (1977–79), p. 63–72.

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111 S. for instance the slabs of the sarcophagus of Anna Maliasini and the sarcophagus slab preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Nikopolis: Pazaras 1988, pl. 30b–35a, pl. 40–41.

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*Fig. 1 Archaeological Museum of Andros, Post-colonnettes, details*

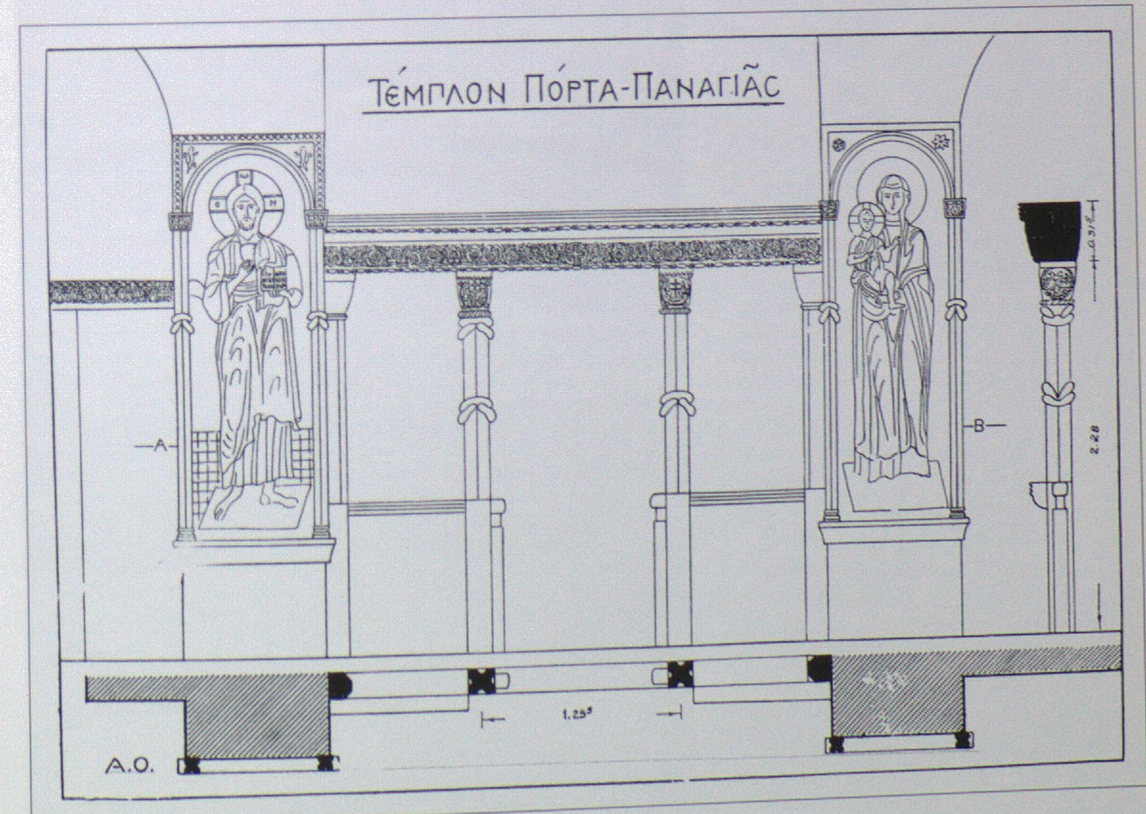



*Fig. 2 Porta Panagia in Thessaly, reconstruction of the templon*



*Fig. 3 Panagia church of Makrynitsa in Thessaly, reused templon capital*



*Fig. 4 Epistyles from the Archaeological Museum of Smyrna*

*Fig. 5 Panagia church of the monastery of Hosios Loukas, underside of the epistyle of the templon of the prothesis*



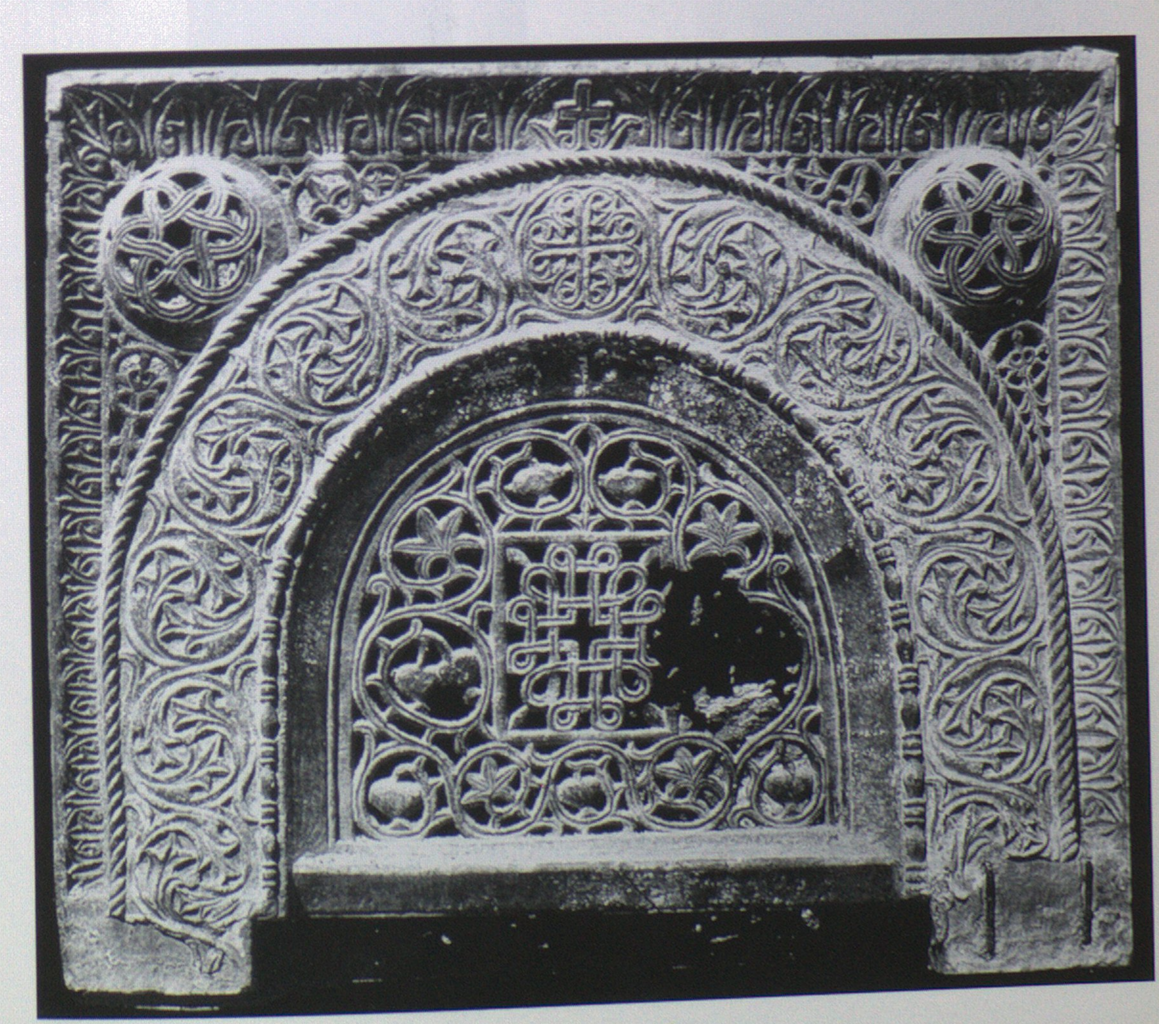


*Fig. 6 Panagia church of the monastery of Hosios Loukas, icon frame*



*Fig. 7 St. Panteleimon in Nerezi, icon frame*

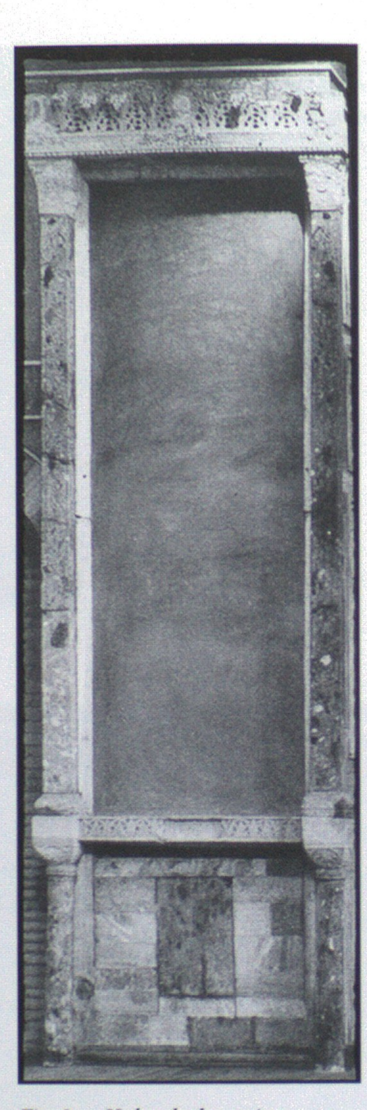


*Fig. 8 a Kalenderhane in Istanbul, north icon frame*

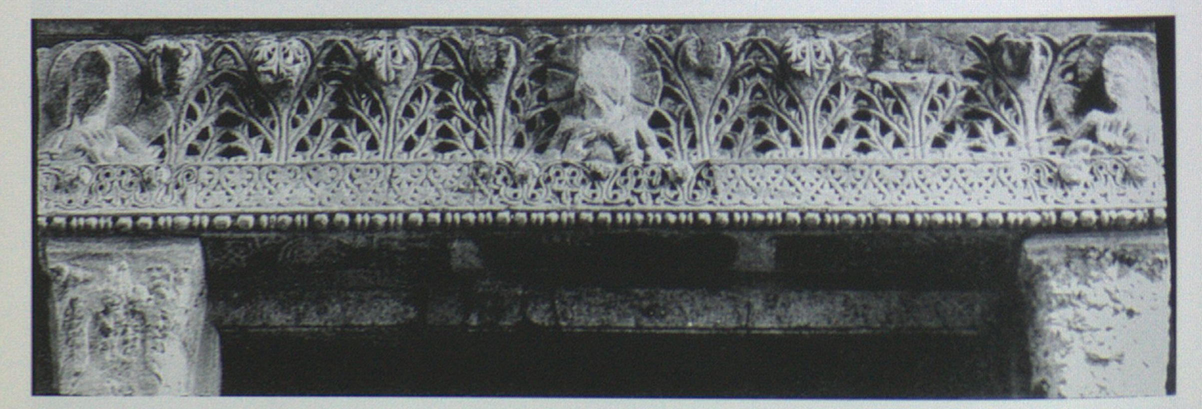
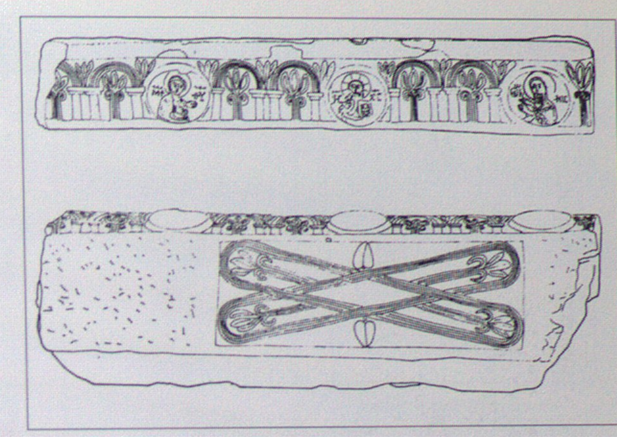


*Fig. 8 b Kalenderhane in Istanbul, north icon frame*

*Fig. 9 Xanthos church in Lycia, part of the epistyle of the templon*



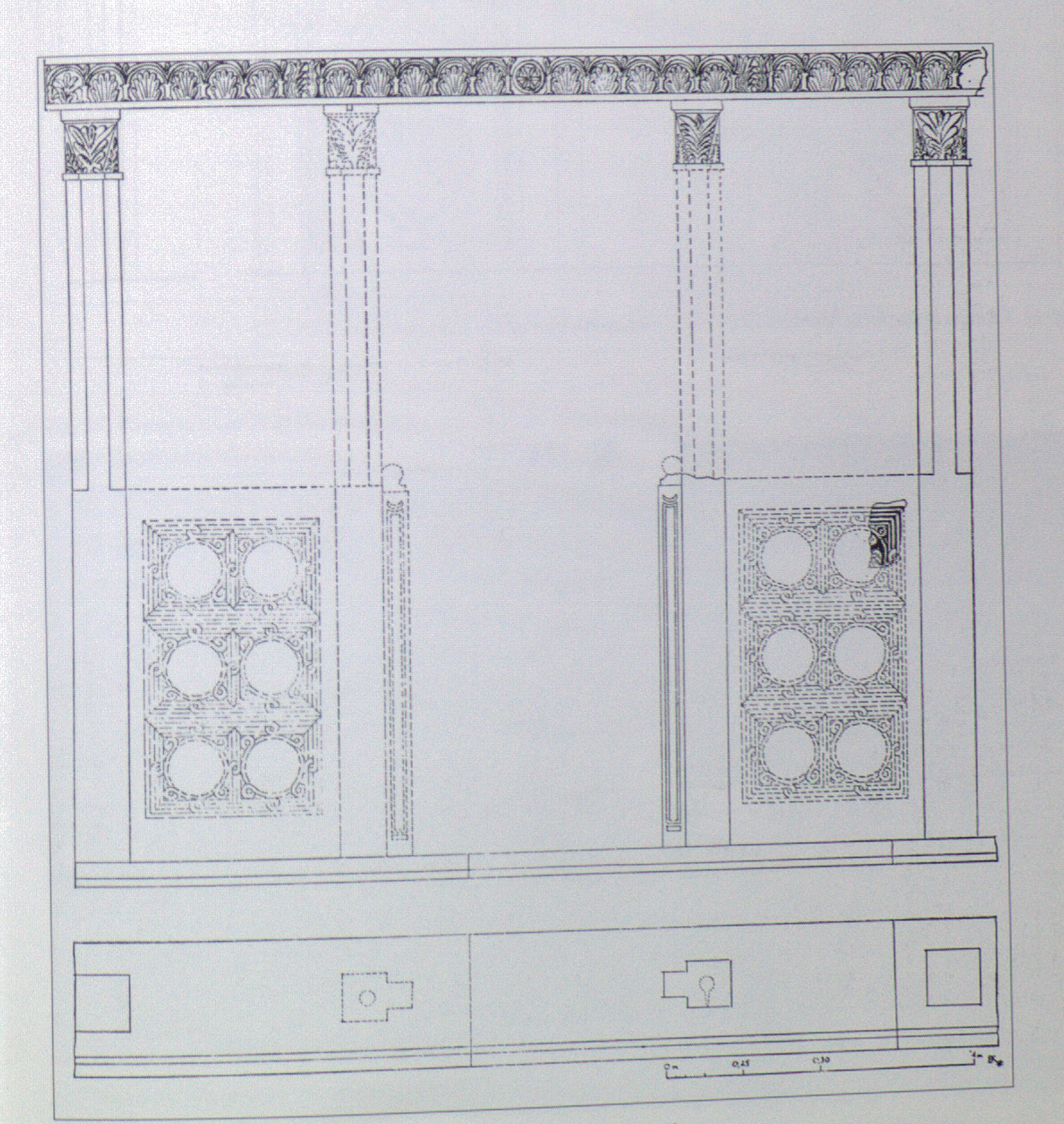


*Fig. 10 Church of the Virgin in Veljusa, reconstruction of the templon*

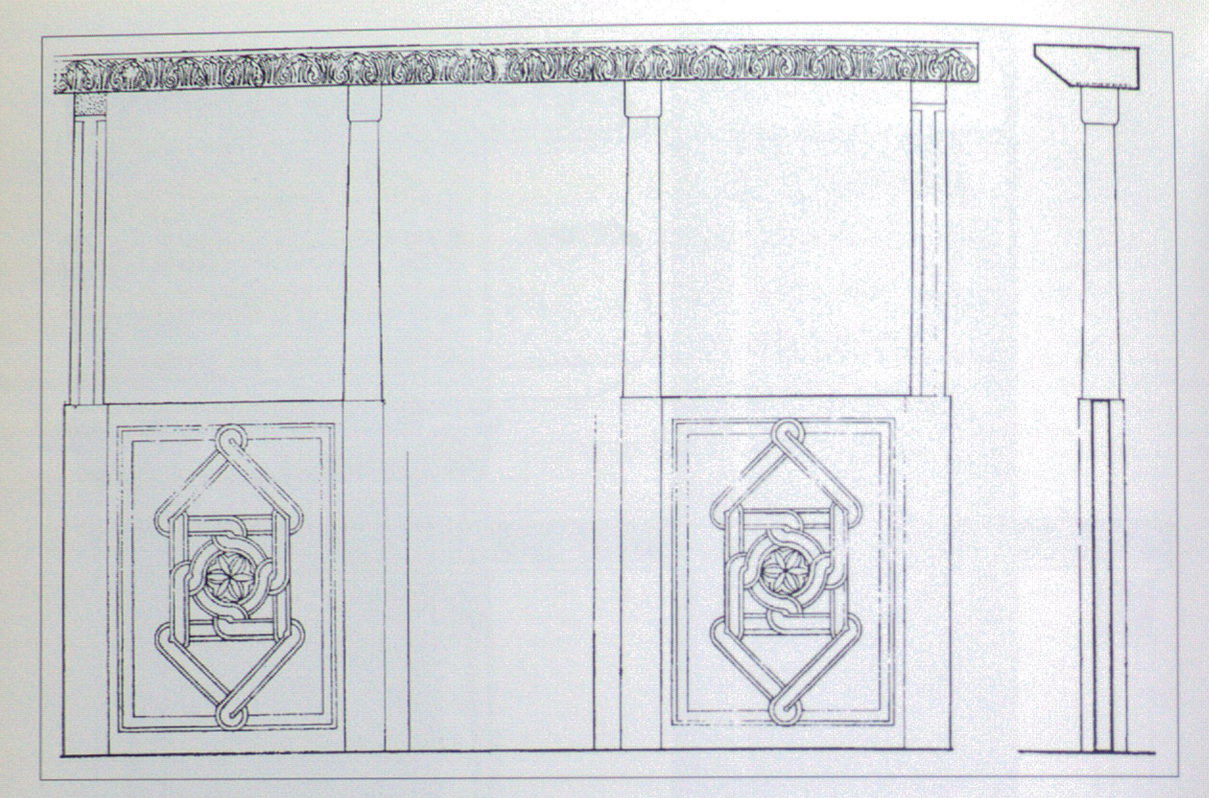
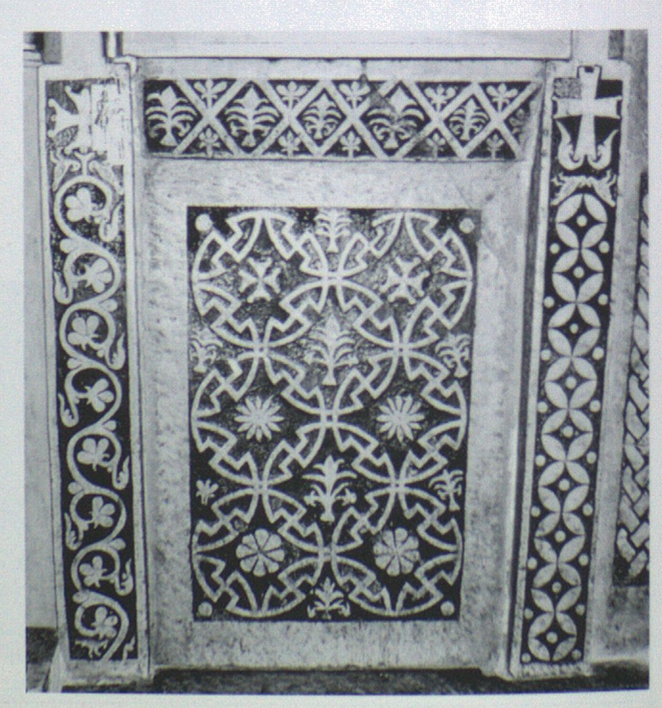
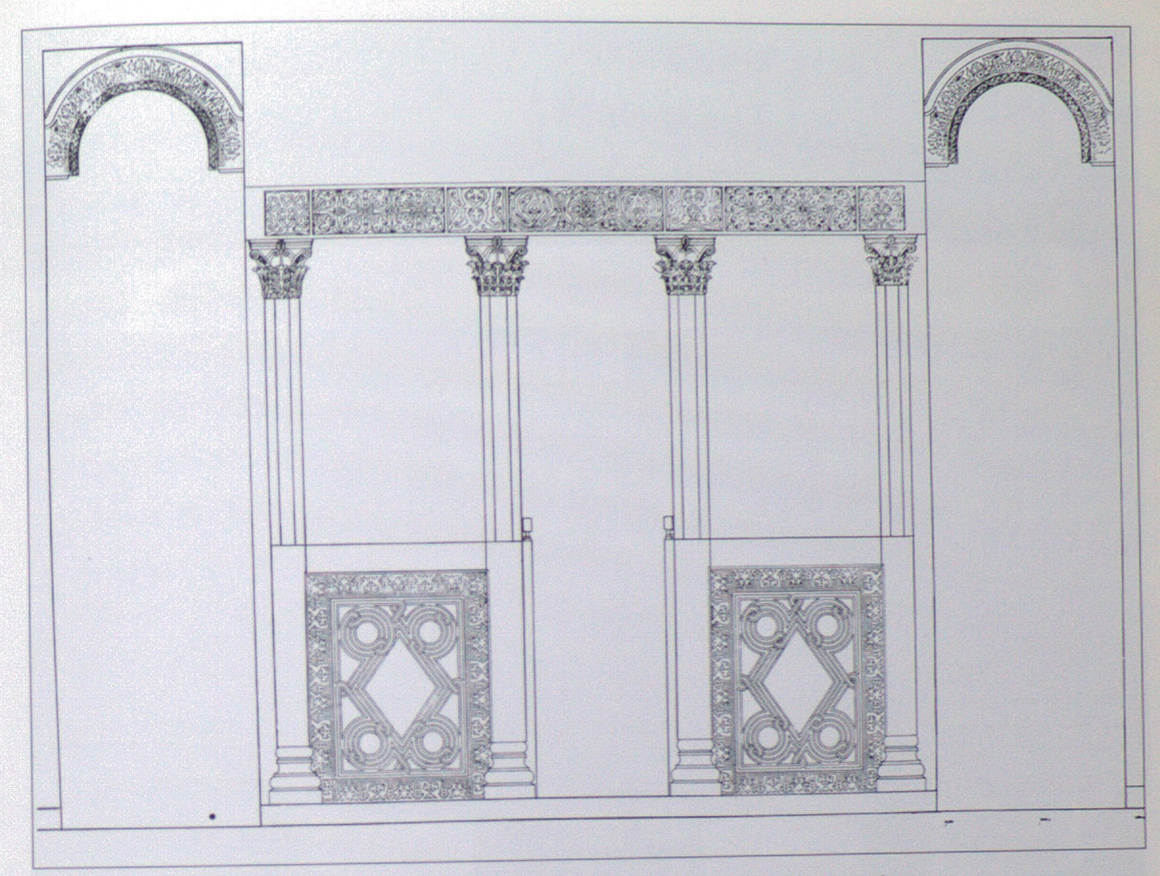

*Fig. 11 Church of the forty Martyrs in Bansko, reconstruction of the templon*


*Fig. 12 St. Sophia in Ohrid, slab of the templon*


*Fig. 13 Episkopi church in Santorini, view of the templon*


*Fig. 14 Panagia church of the monastery of Hosios Loukas, reconstruction of the templon*

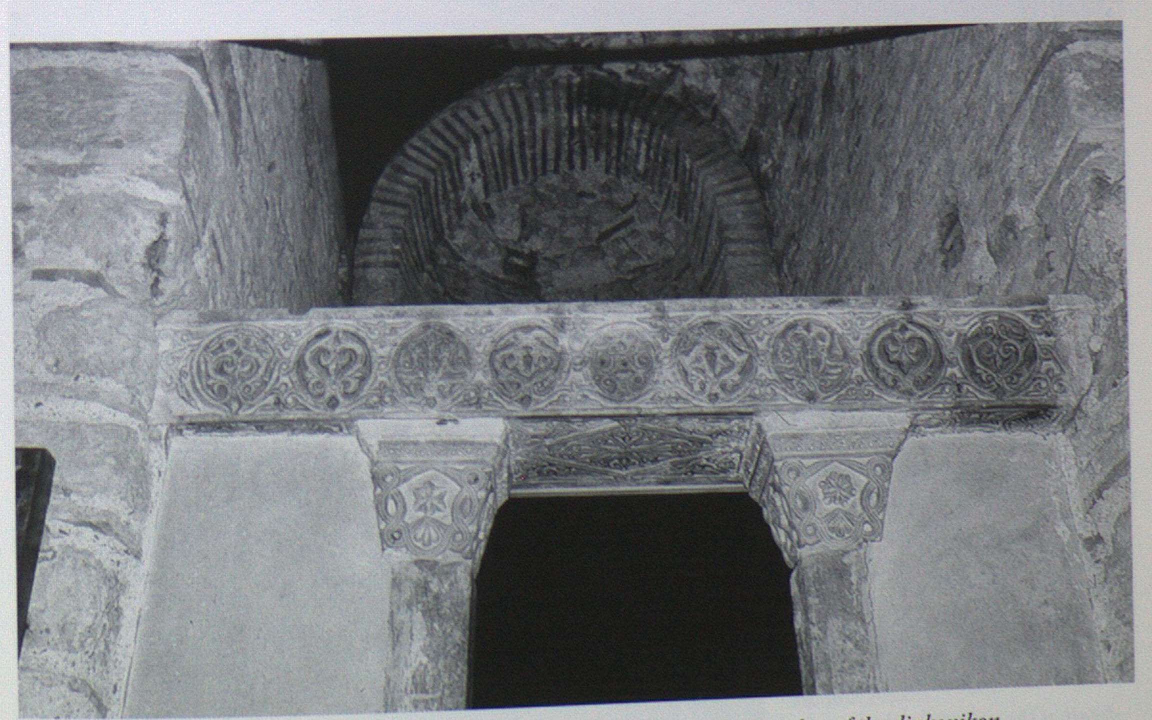

*Fig. 15 Panagia church of the monastery of Hosios Loukas, epistyle of the templon of the diakonikon*



*Fig. 16 Corinth, epistyle, inv. no. AM 308*



*Fig. 17 Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, view of the templon*



*Fig. 18 Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, detail of the epistyle of the templon*

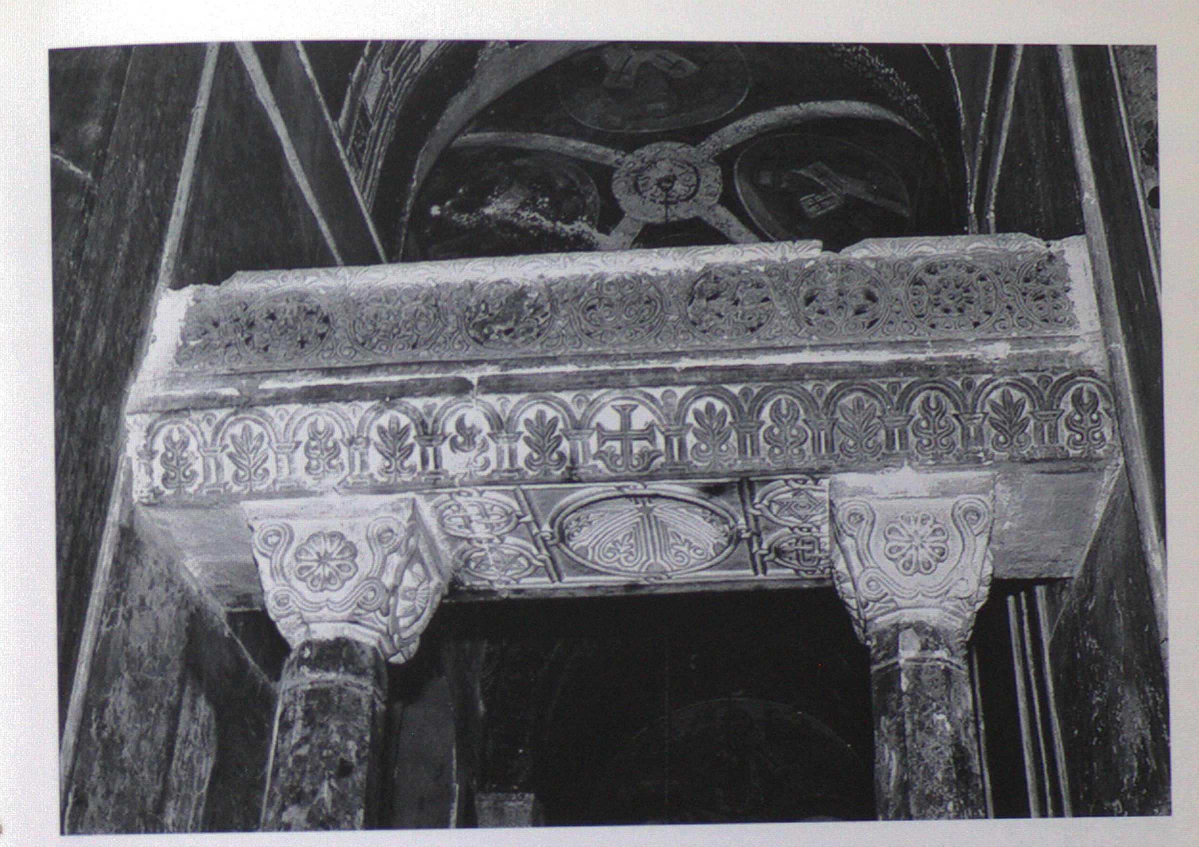


*Fig. 19 Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, epistyle of the templon of the prothesis*



*Fig. 20 Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, epistyle of the templon of the diakonikon*



*Fig. 21 Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour in Amphissa, sculptures of the templon*

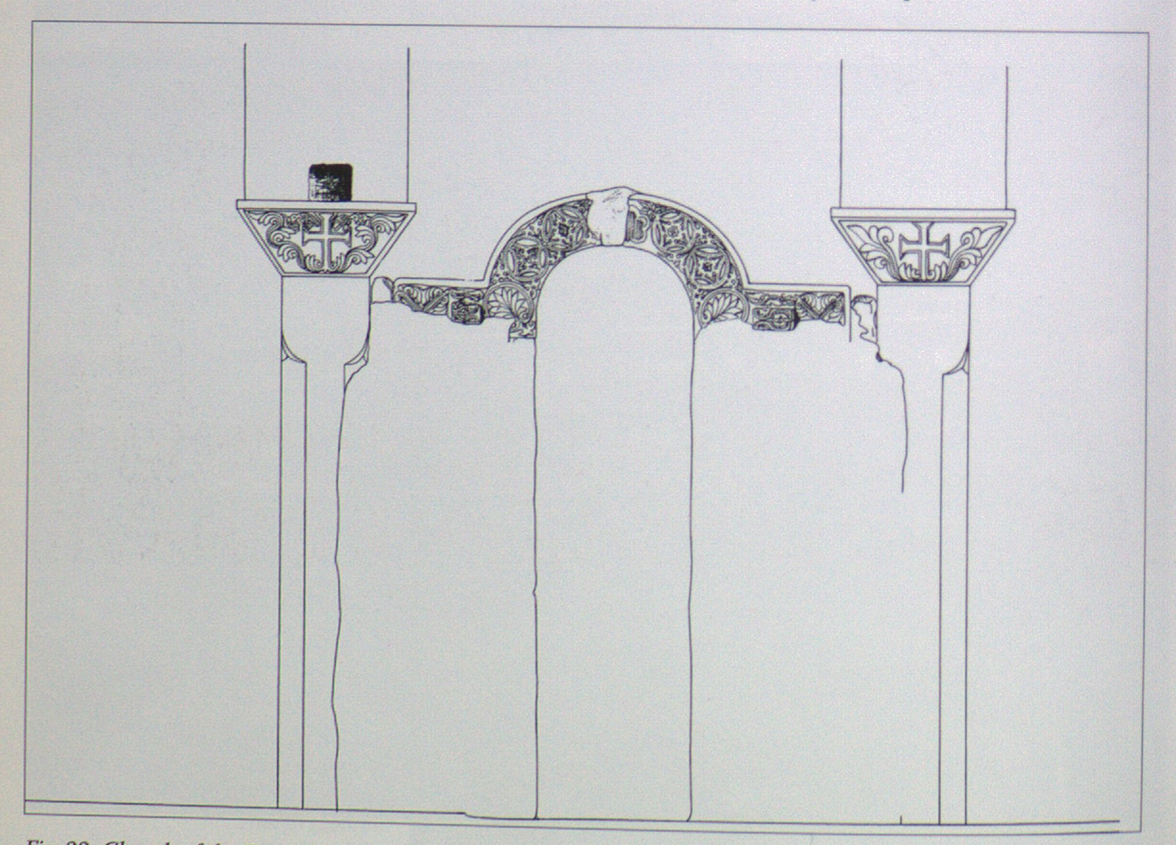


*Fig. 22 Church of the Transfiguration in Nomitzi (Mani), reconstruction of the templon*

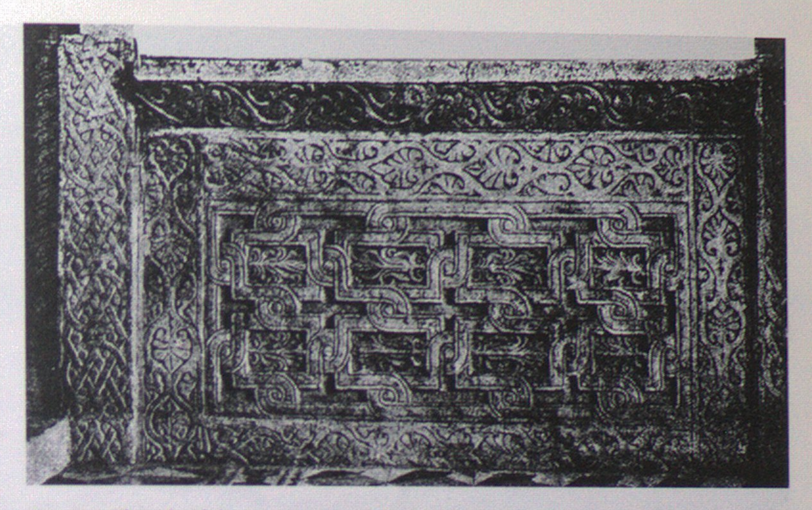


*Fig. 23 Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Apidia, post and slab of the templon*



*Fig. 24 Byzantine Museum of Athens, front of an epistyle, Inv. no. 125, 133, T 252*

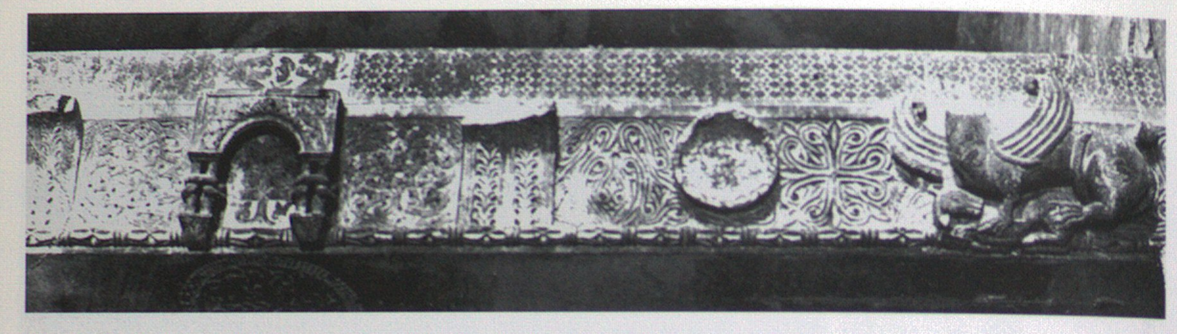


*Fig. 25 Katholikon of the monastery of the Zoodochos Pigis in Samari, epistyle of the templon*



*Fig. 26 Porta Panagia in Thessaly, detail of the epistyle of the templon*



*Fig. 27 Blacherna church in Arta, part of the reused epistyle of the templon*



*Fig. 28 Archaeological Museum of Andros, detail of the front of the epistyle belonging to the templon of the prothesis of the church of the Archangel in Melida*

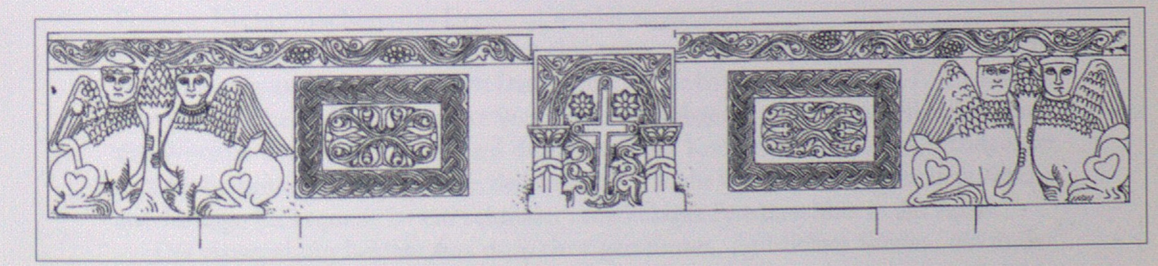


*Fig. 29 St. Nicholas in Thebes, epistyle of the templon*